MUSIC AND LIGHT
IN THE
DARK-SILENCE

By
E. M. TAYLOR,
Hastings

Birmingham
Cornish Brothers Ltd
Publishers to the University
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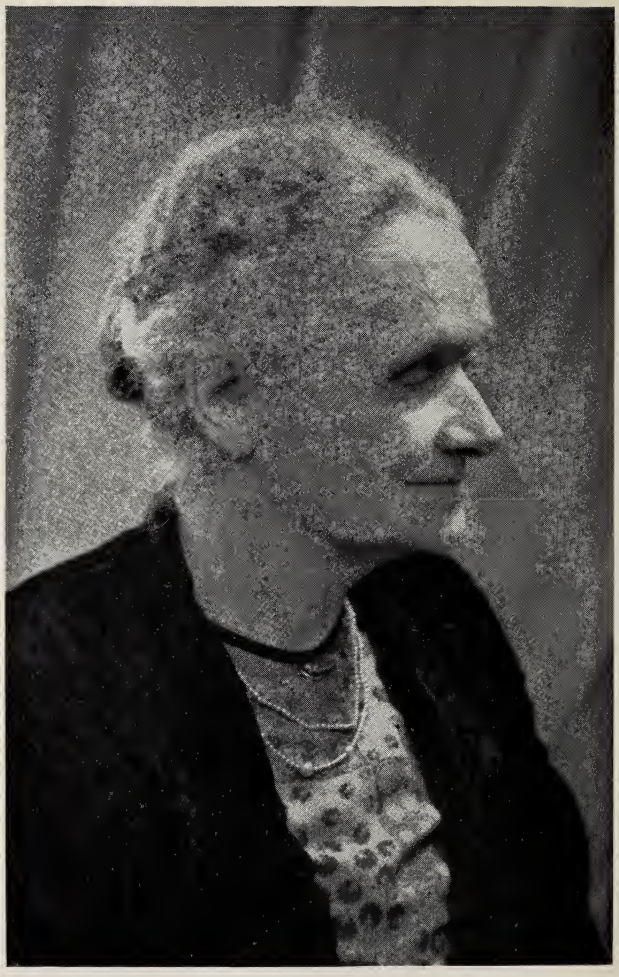

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ERRATA.

Page 33, *line* 8.
For ' expressed ' read ' suppressed '

Page 44, *line* 4.
Delete the word ' not '

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FOREWORD

It is with very great pleasure that I have the privilege of writing a Foreword to Mrs. Taylor's touching and gallant little book. I have the honour to count her my friend and, although I know she would not wish me to eulogize her gifts (which are many), I would like her readers to know at first hand what an inspiration she is to her personal friends and to those who know her as Editor of *The Braille Rainbow*, the quarterly journal of the National Deaf-Blind Helpers' League. Readers of " Music and Light in the Dark-Silence " (of whom, I trust, there will be many) cannot fail to realise Mrs. Taylor's wonderful triumph over what must have been a cruel trial, in the loss of both sight and hearing. This little volume shows her undaunted courage and perseverance, and leaves one with an assurance that her outlook on life is one of Christian fortitude and cheerfulness. Although it tells of the terrible blank which such a deprivation as the loss of sight and hearing must necessarily entail, her valiant struggle in adversity, and her real sense of humour, render the book anything but morbid or depressing, and I hope it will receive, what it certainly deserves, a very warm welcome.

E. M. Twigg.

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ON DEAF-BLINDNESS.

I'm sometimes asked what does it mean
To be both deaf and blind?
To give but half the answer, words
Are very hard to find.

'Tis, though I roam through rural lanes
To breathe the air of Spring;
From me the tender buds are hid,
I hear no wild bird sing.

And though I wander by the shore
In Summer's balmy day,
I hear no gentle rippling sound
Of wavelets as they play.

Nor watch the merry children build
Their castles on the sands,
And splash about with naked feet,
And seaweed in their hands.

All Autumn's crimson banners gay,
The sheaves of golden grain,
The glistening dew of morning fair,
I yearn to see, in vain.

The sparkling gems of winter bright,
For me no brilliance shed;
Hid from me are the movements sweet
Of little robin red.

I never see the kindly face
  Of friends so true and dear,
The loving voice like music sweet
  'Tis never mine to hear.

And though the crowds do throng around,
  I stand as one alone,
As some poor foreigner would do
  Whose language is unknown.

And yet, withal, I still must live,
  And bravely do my part,
To teach the lips to smile, e'enwhile
  The pain is at the heart.

One joy is there, still unimpaired,
  The joy to love and bless
The friends whose thoughtful, tender care
  Doth make each sorrow less.

And for such joy I now give thanks
  To God, whose guiding hand
Hath led to me this solace rich—
  The friends who understand.

LIFE IN THE DARK-SILENCE.

Chapter I.

Fifty-seven years, during which I have been led by many divers paths through the land of "dark-silence," is a long stretch of time to penetrate with the searchlight of memory, to that world of sight and sound which I have left so far behind. There I dimly watch, as they pass in phantom-like procession, the tragedies and immature joys of an unloving and unlovable childhood.

I was born April 25th, 1864, the fourth child of a large family. Always ailing from earliest infancy, and of a fretful quarrelsome disposition, I can recall not one complete day of unalloyed happiness. My attendance at school was too irregular to permit the retention of my name on the register. I was often absent for weeks together, and at the most put in only two or three days instead of five, and left permanently when I was twelve years old.

It was then that the first symptoms of the disease, which afterwards deprived me of both sight and hearing, made their appearance in my right eye. They were thought to have been the result of a sunstroke which I had had the previous summer, or that of a very recent cold, and my mother tried several remedies. As these failed to produce the desired effect, they were followed by a long period of misapplied medical treatment, until

about eighteen months later, when I was taken for advice to the Kent County Ophthalmic Hospital, Maidstone, where I was admitted for an operation, which, however, was not performed.

Although the sight had quite gone from the one eye, that of the other was remarkably strong, and my hearing was so acute that, having been told to rise in the morning when I heard the bell ring at 7 o'clock, I arose and dressed, on my first morning there, at 6 o'clock, having mistaken the prison bell in the distance for the one to sound in the hospital an hour later. After being detained for six weeks, and placed on the operating couch to anticipate the discomfort of an operation without an anæsthetic, it was discovered that the supposed cataract, ripe for removal, was a worn-out lens for which nothing could be done ; but no danger for the other eye was apprehended, and I was discharged.

This was exactly four months before my fourteenth birthday, and when that event came round, it found me very ill with some kind of fever. My hearing was failing, and the dread disease had attacked the other eye. As soon as I was strong enough to travel, I was again taken to Maidstone Hospital, being at once admitted, and there remaining for nineteen weeks. For more than half that period the agony caused by the ravaging inflammation, and the almost incessant application of leeches, blisters and paint, was inexpressibly severe, and the intense relief which I experienced at its cessation tempered, to a great extent, my grief for the irreparable loss of my two most precious senses.

It was in this hospital, while sitting on the hard floor in a dark corner of the cloak room, my aching head pillowed on the coats that were hanging above me (this being my usual retreat from the light which my eyes could not endure, and the naughty, unintentionally cruel children, who found much amusement in mocking and teasing me when, owing to my increasing deafness, I failed to understand what they said) that, in order to divert my thoughts from the extreme mental and physical suffering, I tried to employ them in the art of rhyme-making. " The Dying Child's Dream," from which I have now struck out two verses, and have changed just a word here and there, is the result of my time, and pain-killing, effort. Why the theme, I have no idea; perhaps psychologists would find the explanation in the fact that the hospital garden adjoined the All Saints' Churchyard. By the time these verses were completed, the Doctor had discovered my painful position and transferred me to the Women's Ward, where I was treated with the utmost kindness and consideration, which endeared to me the place that otherwise I might have striven to banish from my memory.

THE DYING CHILD'S DREAM.

Come, Sister dear, beside me sit,
And I will tell to thee
A dream that I have had to-day,
That brought such peace to me.

I felt so tired this afternoon,
When lying here alone,
And being weary, fell asleep
Before the sun went down.

And while its setting crimson glow
Suffused the curtains white,
I stood before a jewelled gate,
So beautiful, so bright.

In wonderment I stood and gazed
When angels, sister dear,
Came forth and gently took my hand
And told me not to fear.

Then through the gate, o'er streets of gold,
By fount and crystal stream,
Upborne on silv'ry wings we sped
So swiftly in my dream.

Sweet melodies that rose and fell
Did fill the fragrant air,
As came we to a glorious throne
Where sat One passing fair.

So tenderly my hair He stroked,
So lovingly He smiled,
As in the kindest voice He said :
" Welcome to thee, my child."

" Welcome to my bright, happy home,
To be for e'er with Me ;
But, first return to those dear friends
Now left to mourn for thee."

" Tell them their Saviour watches o'er
To guide them to the end,
Never to leave them, nor forsake,
He'll be their constant Friend."

I kissed His hand that stroked my hair,
I thanked Him for His love ;
Then, on my new-found silv'ry wings,
I left those realms above.

And as I floated through the air,
I heard the angels sing :
" Another gem for the diadem
Of Thee, our Saviour King."

Then, with a sudden start, I woke,
The vision quickly past :
The sun had dipped behind the hills,
And darkness gathered fast.

And now has risen the pale moon,
The stars show forth their light,
And through them all my happy soul
Will wing its homeward flight.

So, call the dear ones round my bed,
That I may say " good-bye " ;
Farewell, dear friends, you'll meet me there,
In that bright home on high.

The silvery wings unfolded,
The spirit took its flight
To radiant fields of glory
Where all is love and light.

And then within the narrow grave
The little corpse was laid,
A consciousness of peace divine
The mourners' sorrow stayed.

They could not weep for that dear child
Who was supremely blest,
And knowing they again would meet,
They hushed their grief to rest.

(Composed in hospital at the age of fourteen, when losing sight.)

Chapter II.

What remained—Memories of Spring.

It may reasonably be asked, why do I re-visit those scenes that were once so distressing to me? Certainly not with the intention of harrowing the feelings of my friends, or to evoke the sympathies of others. This retrospection is to me like a divining rod; it is discovering anew those unsuspected hidden springs of a child's infatuation for the ever-varying beauty of Nature. There, in that long-vanished past, are the originals of romantic scenes of loveliness which, though now worn and faded with age, are still capable of reproducing soul-thrilling phantasmagoria on the receptive canvas of my well-tried memory.

There, in the enchantment of Spring, I have watched the miraculous pageantry of resurrected life, acclaimed and welcomed by jubilant birds singing in chorus, and the joyous laughter of children, as they threaded their daisy chains and proudly adjusted the dandelions, in imitation of long curling tresses, held in position by their little hats, jauntily trimmed with wreaths of ivy leaves.

There do I find the mauve and white lilac, the yellow lacy laburnum, pale pink dog-roses and delicate May blossom. Emerald fields, spangled gold and white with buttercups and daisies; the hillside ablaze with gorse and broom, and the luxuriant woodlands, a veritable fairy paradise

of colour and sweetness—beauty and fragrance exquisitely portrayed by Nature. And over all an expansive silken canopy of azure, embellished with swan-like, fleecy white cloudlets, and fringed with golden sunbeams. Oh, glorious spring! Would that I might again see thee as thou art and prize thee as I ought—this might be possible to one whom this blessed privilege has been so long denied. For, surely by the daily miracles of Thy creative power dost Thou proclaim the glory of God and manifest His incomparable handiwork.

Would that I might again list to our exuberant feathered friends as they carol sweetly their songs of praise and thanksgiving, and the merry laughter of rollicking children. Ah! such as these were indeed "golden hours set with diamond minutes," and a very rich compensation for many trials.

TO SPRING.

AGAIN we welcome with delight
Thine advent, Queen of Spring !
Beneath thy azure banners bright,
Thy sun-clad army bring.

Old Winter, with a frosty smile,
Lays down his glitt'ring spear,
His ice-bound captives must be freed
With all thy forces here.

The rustle of thy silken robe,
Thy light elastic tread,
Pulsates through Nature's soul with joy,
While all her charms are spread.

Thy magic wand new verdure weaves,
And clothes the naked trees,
Thy kiss the sweetest flowers bribes
To scent the fresh'ning breeze.

Thy woodland path, O Vernal Queen,
Is flecked with golden rays ;
The gurgling streams are dancing forth
In haste to sing thy praise.

The snowy lambs, the patient sheep,
The lively hares are seen,
Enjoying to their heart's content
Thy fields of tender green.

The birds have paired, and now they build
Their cosy little nests,
By instinct guided one and all,
To care for love's bequests.

The children blythe and beautiful,
Their ruddy cheeks a-glow,
Are revelling in the treasures gay
Thou dost on them bestow.

We love thy crown of blossoms fair,
We hail thy youthful sway ;
Thy harbingers—the snowdrops pure
We greet upon their way.

The primrose lifts her sweet pale face,
The gentle violets bow,
And in unfeigned humility
Renew their loyal vow.

The harebells ring their fairy chimes,
The gladsome daisies white,
Mid buttercups and cowslips, smile
Thro' waves of yellow light.

The skylark, thine ambassador,
On joyous wings doth rise,
In melody outpouring clear
Thy message to the skies.

There's health in thy bright countenance,
There's music in thy voice,
I join the universal choir,
With Nature I rejoice.

In thoughts that scintillate like beams
That sparkle in the air,
To God—the Author of my bliss
I breathe my grateful prayer.

Oh, happy birds and children dear,
Let us together sing
With grateful hearts to God, whose love
Gives back to us the Spring.

Chapter III.

Memories of Summer.

Now Summer advances, laden with multi-coloured roses and sweet peas ; stately pure while lilies with hearts of gold ; heliotrope, pinks and carnations. These all fill the air with their rich perfumes, as shyly, in the language of flowers, they respond to the mellow cooing of gentle doves and the oft repeated call of the cuckoo. Again I see the rural lane through which I passed on my first visit to Coghurst Farm. How well do I recall the frantic delight with which I saw the wild strawberries on the wayside banks, and gathered the tall foxgloves and trailing honeysuckles. What ecstasy to listen to the singing of birds, and to watch the squirrels frisking among the trees, and an occasional rabbit scurrying across the road and suddenly disappearing. To my childish imagination it was wonderful, and something more. There, too, is the field where I was buried, and helped to bury my romping playmates, beneath the heaps of light, sweet-scented hay. Oh ! these were blissful hours, even though naughtiness or sickness spoiled their after-effect.

And now I am in a nursery garden, where I have been sent to buy fruit and flowers for mother, who is ill. While these are being gathered, the kind old gardener allows me to sit on the low stonewall encircling a large pond, in the centre of which is a marvellous magical fountain. From this the crystal

showers rise high in the air, then break in glistening spray and fall in myriads of dimples on the surface of the clear water below; where, from among the green sedges and from under the leaves of water-lilies, the gold and silver fish dart in and out like so many flashes of brilliant light. Is it some undefinable premonition that causes the sharp pang of sorrowful regret as I hear the slowly returning footsteps of the aged gardener? Perhaps so. Good is it for us that the hand of mercy screens the future from our view and leads by a way we know not. Were it otherwise, should we have the courage to go on? I think not. As I leave the garden, I can see in the distance to my left the beautiful sea, reflecting the deep sapphire of the sky above; and as it ripples over the shining sands I know it is kissing the little bare feet of care-free children who are building their castles—not in air—but soon to be washed away by the incoming tide. I wonder by what roads through life those same children have been led, and where are they now; perhaps some of them will read these words?

MY PICTURE FAIR.

WOULD that I were an artist skilled
With canvas, brush and colours true !
Would that I had the means and power,
My picture fair to share with you !

This rural lane of Sussex dear ;
The setting sun in summertide,
When golden gleams like angels' wings
Through trees and hedges softly glide.

The wayside banks of deepening green
With strawberries of pinky red ;
The foliage in darker shade
With honeysuckles overspread.

The foxgloves in superior height,
Which lend their aid to grace the scene
And stretching far, the ripening corn
Aglow in sunset's crimson sheen.

A pretty cottage, small and neat,
Half hid among the apple trees ;
With roses climbing o'er its walls
A-nodding to the whispering breeze.

Alas ! I'm failing sadly here
To share with you the rustling wind
That quivers through mine every pulse,
With cooling balm to heart and mind.

Ethereal wine the soul to cheer,
  Delicious in its fragrance sweet,
Or is it fan for traveller's brow,
  Chasing away the drops of heat ?

Enthralling tho' the artist be,
  His painted scenes are ever still,
No note of joyous bird he gives,
  And silent is the rippling rill.

Surpassing all, to Nature's given
  Beauty and joy in motion blent ;
The dancing flies, the humming bees,
  So lively in their glad content.

I would that I might tarry here,
  Away from town and irksome toil,
To breathe the pure refreshing air,
  And tread with ease the moss-clad soil.

To feel the power of blessed truth
  That writ on all around I see,
In shining words as if it were
  By magic pen inscribed for me.

The changeless truth that God is Love,
  So simple now to understand,
With His All-glorious smile of peace
  Broadcast alike o'er sea and land.

Violet, red, and orange fair,
  Are flushing now the distant west,
Alluring Twilight from the east—
  That ministrant to Nature's rest.

How coyly forth she gently steals,
On noiseless tiptoe drawing nigh
Her flowing mantle, pearly-grey,
Is spreading o'er the azure sky.

A curtain dark of velvet blue,
Adorned with gems of twinkling light,
Is drawn upon her silvery wake,
As tenderly she says " Good night."

Chapter IV.

Memories of Autumn.

Autumn seems to have left with me but one vivid impression. It is between seven and eight o'clock on a bright September morning, and I am standing without the gates of Coghurst farmyard. Immediately before me, sloping down to a copse of hazel trees, is a large field studded here and there with the soft white " buttons " and the miniature umbrella-shaped mushrooms. The pearl-like gems of sparkling dew are shining on each separate blade of grass, and in one beauteous whole irradiating the rose-tinted golden sunlight. Around the fields the brambles that grow there uncontrolled are flinging their wealth of luscious blackberries among the hips and haws in the hedge behind them, and hanging low their tempting clusters over the ditch that is now almost hidden beneath them.

Beyond the copse is a vast plantation, where the pale green hops, toning pleasantly with darker green leaves, are climbing around the lofty poles. Some of their late companions are now lying in stacks beside the bins of coarse canvas, attached to wooden frames into which the busy toilers are quickly gleaning the fragrant bines while still they are tender and fresh.

In a field to my left, the ploughman is following his team of brown and grey horses, his long white smock and scarlet kerchief contrasting picturesquely

with the warm brown of the freshly made furrows ; and in the background, both far and near, are several orchards where the fruit, ripe for harvest, in mellow tints of varied red, gold and purple, challenges the admiring and covetous glances of passers by.

Is it remotely possible for those who reverently appreciate the beautiful face of smiling Nature to realise the magnitude of deprivation to those who, without knowing the reason why, must walk through life blind-folded and with sealed ears ? If so, would not the darkness of each of these sorely tried ones be flooded with the music of sweet companionship ? Would not each lonely heart, in the fullness of its own experience, reverberate to my definition of love ?

WHAT IS LOVE?

WHAT is love? A sunbeam bright,
That maketh earth's dark shadows light,
And in splendour brightly shining,
Adds a beauteous golden lining
To sorrow's darkest cloud.

What is love? A noble deed
That meets us in the hour of need,
Assisting with so sweet a grace;
No condescension may we trace
In its fair courtesy.

What is love? A happy voice
That in our joy we may rejoice,
And in our sadness ever feel
Its soothing influence o'er us steal,
As oil on troubled seas.

What is love? A warm strong hand
Supporting when we trembling stand;
A hand in earnest to draw back
The briar stretching o'er the track
Our pilgrim feet must take.

What is love? I can but say
A rainbow set in life's brief day;
Its many colours all combine
With soft resplendency to shine
In one unrivalled ray.

Each changing hue love represents
With its befitting sentiments,
All sweetly blend and brightly shed
Their glory o'er the path we tread,
And this is love supreme.

Chapter V.

Gleanings.

Although I have both seen the autumn leaves and walked through the decaying masses of those that were fallen—pleasantly conscious of their rich variegated reds, browns and yellows, Nature's own peculiar decoration and won by a life of active service bravely fought in their appointed place on the parent tree—I must have done so in circumstances too ordinary to have left any lasting impression on my mind. The leaves are still there, minus their environment; and like the bracken they appear to be more glorious in dying than in living, as though all previous energy, in resisting the angry winds, the fierce rays of the scorching sun, and the sharp onset of the early frosts, had culminated in one supreme effort of joy-giving radiance—a transformation scene in the guileless art of colour.

In my recall of the three sister seasons, I have until now refrained from mentioning that wonderful atmospheric phenomenon, the rainbow—that beautiful symbol of hope and promise. Even now, after fifty-seven years, the recollection of its appearance has for me a most tranquillizing, and at the same time, inspiring influence. The very word rainbow I find strangely fascinating, and it is inseparably associated with my work of the last few years.

Winter, though so often coming in the guise of a stern exacting tyrant, before whom all creatures cower, and Nature shivers at his icy touch, has bestowed on me treasures of priceless value which adorn the innermost recesses of my memory. Among these are to be found the delicate traceries on the frosted window-panes, the snowy mantles of ermine softness and dazzling whiteness, making the earth fair as a bride arrayed for her lord. There are the sparkling icicles suspended from the eaves and branches as lustres from a chandelier, their irradiancy in certain lights being like unto miniature rainbows caught by fairy-like stealth and imprisoned in fetters of crystal. There, too, is my favourite little robin red, his shining breast glowing brightly against his russet feathers, his bright fearless eyes eloquent with unabashed trustfulness.

My picture of the sea on a day of record storm has gradually become almost deleted, though occasionally I catch a fleeting glimpse of huge green foam-crested billows, as they rise to an incredible height, then, rushing onward, break with a lion-like roar against the towering cliffs, or dash in unbridled fury over the promenade. The sunless, cheerless hours—and these were many—I have always striven to forget, unless I have discovered that they were really crushed diamonds, the worth of which I have proved by later experience. The tragedies, the hair-breadth escapes from what might have been serious injuries, or even death itself, seem to have been mentally chronicled in black and white, to be read and re-read as facts

relating to myself, but never to be gazed upon with the affectionate tenderness of recall. And then, at the cross-roads where childhood merges into adolescence, I was overtaken, arrested, and led by the hand of relentless fate, through the gateway of affliction into what, for want of a better name, has been called the " land of dark-silence."

SORROW:

An Allegory.

Her sombre wings were folded close;
Clouded, her thoughtful brow;
And though I knew that Angel's face,
I asked her: "Who art thou?"

"My name is Sorrow, dear," she said,
"And I have come to stay
To be your chief companion hence
On life's eventful way."

As then she crossed the threshold o'er
And took my trembling hand,
The meaning in her tragic words
I failed to understand.

Week after week she lingered there
And often heard me sigh,
For, with my uninvited guest,
The time went slowly by.

One day as she beside me sat,
She said in tearful way:
"You ill do bear my presence here,
You'd rather me not stay?

"You pine for my twin sister, Joy,
Who wins the praise of all;
The whole of God's creation fair
Responds to her bright call.

" The roses bloom upon her cheeks,
The birds rejoice her ear ;
The sunbeams play upon her path
And flee when I draw near.

" The wise, subdued, their blessings give
And gravely wish ' God-speed,'
Yet few are they my problems solve,
Or seek my lore to read."

I turned in silent wonder, then,
So tenderly she spoke ;
Her yearning pathos touched my heart
And my rebellion broke.

" Oh, speak not thus, dear Sorrow—mine."
I faltered out at last,
And with remorse sincere and deep,
My arms around her cast.

" I have been grieving for myself,
I'll try to be more brave,
And ever do my uttermost
Your gentle worth to save."

" Let us be friends," she pleaded low,
With sweet, alluring smile,
" You try to bear with Sorrow, now,
And I will teach erewhile."

To emphasize her dulcet plea,
A still, small voice within
Was telling me life's lesson must
In Sorrow's school begin.

I took my place beside her there,
My heart and mind intent
On solving varied problems sore
As each one came and went.

I saw my teacher pause to gaze
In two bright eyes of blue,
Their sapphire blue was quickly spent,
Their lustre faded, too.

A filmy whiteness spread them o'er,
A veil, obscuring light,
And Nature's charms were hid without
A darker dark than night.

I watched her icy fingers cold,
Caress the roses sweet ;
With fragrant sigh they withered soon
And fell beneath her feet.

In silence, then, she bent and kissed
A laughing child at play,
Oh ! how that little form declined,
And soon had passed away.

I heard her breathing mystic spells
Beside the tossing sea ;
From signal rockets of distress
The sounds came o'er to me.

Then, as I met her soulful eyes,
Now shining bright and clear,
Her words of blest assurance fell
Like music on mine ear.

" 'Tis mine to prove the gain in loss,
To purge from dross the gold,
To prune the spirit's upward growth,
Enriching it tenfold.

" I must fulfil my mission here,
I must of sorrow teach ;
For there are few without my aid
A higher plane would reach."

For years we have together been,
Her secret now is mine ;
No cloud is here, however dark,
Without its silver line.

If e'er I go to Joy's abode,
Or visit those her friends,
Unwise it seems to tarry there
Unless dear Sorrow tends.

For Sorrow teacheth laws Divine,
By which 'twere best to live ;
She savours of a sweet content
No worldly joy can give.

Where she is not 'tis sometimes said
The spirit often frets ;
So taken by its many gifts,
The Giver it forgets.

Though strange to some it may appear,
With Sorrow I found joy,
That joy which none can take away,
And free from all alloy.

No fairy dream of child's delight,
No giddy hope of Youth,
No phantasy of rip'ning years,
But pure, eternal truth.

A joy that gives both strength and peace
When life misfortune brings ;
A joy that nestles closer still
Beneath dear Sorrow's wings.

Chapter VI.

"*Sarah.*"

On May 26th, 1879, just eight months from the time of my discharge from the Ophthalmic Hospital, I was admitted to the School for the Blind, Eastern Road, Brighton. There remained only three weeks to the Midsummer vacation, and during this very short time it was decided whether, with the aid of a "long conversation tube," the slight degree of hearing that still lingered in my right ear was sufficient to permit me to be educated in the various arts for the blind.

This school, unlike so many we read of earlier in the nineteenth century, was spacious, clean, well-appointed and well disciplined. The Braille system —which has since transformed the whole world of the blind, by flooding the darkness with an ever increasing supply of well assorted embossed literature—was not then in general use, though we were taught to write in it. The books we read were in the "Moon" type, and these were few, cumbersome and expensive. Even so, they were invaluable to us, who had nothing better, and they have continued always the best to many others who have found the Braille too complicated.

Being the only deaf pupil, I was unavoidably debarred many interests and enjoyments, and often had much difficulty in keeping pace with my more fortunate companions. But these remarks are

somewhat previous. I should first relate a certain misadventure that caused my probationary three weeks to terminate in a trial for which I had not in the least been prepared and which might have ended much more seriously.

It chanced that on the beautiful rose-flushed morning of June 17th, I was vigorously enjoying myself on a swing, the construction of which I can but ill describe. It consisted of a flat board, approximately 5 feet long by 2 feet wide; and by means of four long iron rods about an inch thick was suspended from twin arches supported by cross-beams. This swing accommodated six of us—two standing face to face at each end and two sitting down, one on each side of the centrepiece. On this particular occasion I happened to be an outsider, and as the end of the board farthest from me made its air-hill ascent, my right foot slipped, and as I swerved backward it touched the ground. Before I could regain my balance and replace my foot, the heavy construction, with its freight of laughing girls, came down upon it, broke the ankle and carried the foot beneath it along the ground. Fortunately, I kept a tight grasp upon the iron bars, and was able to draw up the mangled member as the swing went up at my end. The kind maids—who, from the kitchen window, had been watching our energetic performance with much amusement—had seen the catastrophe, and were soon on the spot with practical and sympathetic assistance. Thus it came about that my first holiday from the Blind School was spent in hospital. I

was very lame for weeks, but neither this nor my deafness disqualified me being accepted as a pupil. Most of the girls were both kind and considerate towards me, and took it in turns to stay with me in the playground, while the others went for their daily constitutional. Five hours a day were equally divided between elementary lessons and some kind of occupation; my own was knitting and crocheting, of which I seemed never to grow weary and to which I gave all my spare time.

Christmastide was our brightest festival and the theme of much joyful anticipation. There were always so many little gifts to be made for the dear ones at home and others to be pleasantly contemplated. There were the decorations to inspect, the ample viands to discuss; and, when the day arrived, there was the huge tree in the centre of the schoolroom, around which we gathered excitedly to receive our packet or box of mystery, and other appreciable little presents. There was the gay dancing, the jolly games of Orange and Lemon and Gathering Nuts in May, and other harmless merriments.

Although, by reason of my deafness, I could not participate in the music and sweet carol-singing, with my hand resting on the piano I felt the vibration of the exultant chords, and caught the infection of the animating glow of wholehearted happiness.

Apart from these festivals, the picnics on the beach and on the sun-kissed, wind-swept downs, the annual outings in wagonettes to the Chinese gardens and our summer holidays, the days glided

by into weeks, and weeks into months in very much the same order, with nothing of special interest to relate until December, 1880, when our liveliest curiosity was aroused by the advent of a new pupil, who was said to be nineteen years of age. During the introduction, as my hand and name were given to this latest arrival, she exclaimed in a voice that quivered with expressed emotion: "Oh! I am so glad to find you here!" Considerably astonished I impatiently awaited the explanation, for, to the best of my recollection, I had never before heard the name of Sarah Crowhurst. As soon as we were alone together she hastened to tell me her remarkable story. She had been admitted to the Ophthalmic Hospital only a few days after I had left it. Her sight, though seriously impaired, was far from being spent; but she suffered acutely from protracted spells of depression and, not infrequently, presented the appearance of abject misery. The patients—very mistakenly as was afterwards proved—thought her to be too indulgent in self-pity. In order to check this, and to fortify her courage, they had given her, what seemed to me to have been an exaggerated account of great suffering borne with patient resignation by a young girl, who had gone forth to continue life's pilgrimage without either sight or hearing. So deeply touched had Sarah been that the subject of this moving narrative had ever since been enshrined in her affections with the passion of hero-worship. Vehemently had she longed to find that young girl, that her own remaining sight and her hearing

might be dedicated in her service. Two years had passed ; her prayers were still unanswered and her heart was growing weary with the sickening pang of hope deferred. And then—her vision having become more clouded—it was deemed advisable that she should go to a school to learn to read and write by touch. From the hour of our meeting Sarah took me under her special care, and lost no opportunity of giving me every possible assistance, for which I soon had the sorest need.

Early in January, owing to an accident with my hearing tube, in addition to the infliction of an intense pain, I became totally deaf. It was then Sarah who shielded me from collision with the other girls, who could not know where I was. It was Sarah who learned the Manual Alphabet, and kept me acquainted with all that went on around me. I was being prepared for confirmation, and it was Sarah who interpreted my lessons ; and when, at Easter, I knelt at the altar to receive my first Holy Communion, it was Sarah who knelt beside me and received that blessed Sacrament for the last time on earth.

Rather more than a week later she became very ill and, yielding to her importunate pleadings, the matron sympathetically allowed me to take my knitting and sit beside her bed. The memory of those few sad, yet beautiful, last days that we spent together is too precious, too sacred, to be unfolded here, save only to mention that again and again she devoutedly thanked God for having permitted her to find me, and to share and lighten the great

suffering from which I had so lately recovered. The surgical examination revealed an inflamed tumour on the brain ; yet so absolutely self-forgetting had she been in her loving, self-imposed task, that I had never once even suspected the presence of pain when at times she must have been in terrible agony. How much I owed to her constant care and kindness, and how much I missed her faithful devotion during my remaining stay at school—about another year—words have not power to express.

BEAR YE ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS.

BEAR ye one another's burdens,
And your Saviour's will fulfil;
Help the weaker ones in climbing
Up life's steep and rugged hill.

Oft is it we slight the blessings
That have fallen to our share,
When we might with these be helping
Drooping ones their cross to bear.

Oft is it a word of kindness
Would a wealth of comfort shed
In some lonely heart that's aching.
Why, then, leave that word unsaid?

Oft is it, when self-forgetting,
Deeds we render for love's sake,
Sweeter, richer, ten-fold greater,
Joys for others they do make.

And reflect on us such brightness
That our sacrifice were gain
For no word, nor deed of kindness,
May be said or done in vain.

Though, perchance, it sometimes happens
They do fall on barren soil;
Yet not lost our words of kindness,
Nor our self-denying toil.

Angel hands, in sweet compassion
Gather up the scattered seeds ;
They shall beautify God's heaven
With the bloom from helpful deeds.

And amid their fragrant beauty
Our love words from golden strings,
Caught, and tuned by seraph minstrels,
Rise on music's rainbow wings.

Let us then be far more lavish
With the seeds of kindness here,
So shall we go forth in gladness
When the harvest time is near.

Chapter VII.

Sources of Solace.

It would serve little or no purpose here to follow closely and consecutively the events of my chequered life during the past five and a half decades ; it will suffice to say that for fourteen years subsequent to my leaving the School for the Blind I had the blessed privilege to reside with my parents, and with the youngest members of the family until they had grown old enough to leave home. Although a state of dependance must inevitably be irksome to an independent spirit—and few are there who can rightly interpret the restlessness and vague desires of the caged soul as hopelessly and helplessly it beats its wings against its prison bars—yet for the greater part of this period I was happy and contented, when kept constantly employed by knitting and light housework. This was by no means an easy matter. My nimble fingers and excessive energy were too often prone to make work scarce, notwithstanding the fact that we were living in the Victorian age, when windows were hung with curtains which I knitted with fine cotton in the "Fuchsia" pattern—an elaborate design comprising sixty intricate rows requiring careful concentration. Counterpanes and antimacassars were in similar pattern, though varying in the size of cotton ; and there were innumerable articles of

wearing apparel for which we could find good use, and my knitting became my very dear companion—although it sometimes betrayed my confidence. I might suddenly discover a reversed pattern, or a truant stitch far below its appointed place on the needle, and, after bringing it up, rung after rung of the ladder by which it made its rapid descent, the effect, owing to its lacy character, was sometimes so irregular that the only remedy was to unknit a considerable number of rows. Not infrequently this made matters worse, and resulted in my endeavours to rectify the mischief continuing through the whole night in addition to the many hours of the preceding day. If, in the end, I succeeded in my object, the tediousness of the task was quickly forgotten in the exultation of achievement—the joy of victory won by patient endurance. But there were times when all efforts failed, and the work had to be begun again.

My unhappiest days—days of accentuated weariness—were Sundays. The very few books I possessed were in the " Moon " type, and I knew each one by heart. I had not the solace of my time-beguiling knitting; to have engaged in this would then have seemed an act of wilful Sabbath breaking. In those days I learned by sad experience that rest—apart from the spiritual quiet of devout meditation—is not found in enforced idleness. True rest lies in work cheerfully co-operating with a mind in complete harmony with the Infinite.

To entertain my thoughts on the aforesaid monotonous occasions, I spent many hours in

rhyme-making, which, however, invariably betrayed a certain vein of melancholy, consequent upon the bridled force of an imprisoned soul and the morbidity of a starving intellect, together with the entire absence of prosody. These, for the most part, were quickly forgotten, having been created for no other purpose than that of mental safety valves. Brighter verse, some of which are contained in this little volume, were inspired under the soothing influence of fingers busy in work that needed not my undivided attention. Many such verses I committed to paper in Braille, having a vague notion that one day, perhaps, I might be able to revise them. These were accidentally destroyed; a few only remained pertinaciously clinging to my memory. This accident was not a matter for grave concern, as I had then something else wherewith to occupy my thoughts; and having always been sensitive of their demerits, I had never for a moment the remotest intention of presenting them to the public. I do so now by special request, and my sole object in adding these few memoirs from my own history is an earnest desire to assist nervous sympathisers and diffident would-be helpers to realise that within the restricted boundaries of blindness, in conjunction with deafness, are active minds and animate souls of those who were once happy little children; children in full possession of all five senses, and the licence of free action given to healthy limbs; children whose vivid imagination, even thus early, may have caught the radiance of a phantom future. And now,

older grown, fettered by affliction, they may be pining for the fresh air and sunshine which it is theirs to enjoy when kind friends will lend a guiding arm. And yet, even these unfortunate ones are richer by far than those impoverished sufferers who have not this wealth of tender reminiscences to carry with them into the dark and silent land—no resplendence from a beautiful past to irradiate the present. The most precious gift that can be given to any one of these brave, patient cross-bearers—I speak not for myself but for my many comrades—is the blessedness of understanding friendship; for in true friendship do we find the most tangible expression of that All-loving Friend, who is indeed a friend above all others. Such friends it has been my happiness to find—or, shall I say, they have found me? To these friends I dedicate "My Beam," which I have but recently composed.

MY BEAM.

Is it the beam of Summer morn
  That shed its rosy light
Over a landscape beautiful
  With dews that glisten bright?
Where silver mists from hill and vale
  In fleecy cloudlets rise,
And spread like angel pinions fair
  Across the azure skies?
    Not this, not this, my Beam.

Is it that dazzling golden ray
  That falls at noontide hour,
When languid Nature's fevered pulse
  Suspends awhile its power?
When shadows still, arrested lie,
  And drowsy insects hear
The sporting fairies' winsome laugh,
  In streamlets crystal clear?
    Not this, not this, my Beam.

Is it that rich vermilion glow
  With gold and purple blent,
In tender radiance to declare
  His airy pageant spent;
As with a touch on lofty peaks,
  And ocean's crimson breast,
The Day-king with a smile suffused
  Descends the distant west?
    Not this, not this, my Beam.

Though all are prized in mem'ry dear,
Though glorious they be,
Their amber wealth and roseate hues
I now but dimly see.
Not one of these, my treasured ray,
Not such my song inspire,
Within my heart a joy supreme
Hath lit its beacon fire,
The fire of this, my Beam.

For this my Beam, is friendship sweet,
A God-sent love Divine
With spiritual effulgence pure,
My darkest cloud to line.
In rainbow colours flashing o'er
Sympathy, kindness, truth,
Transforming my declining years
With its eternal youth,
The youth of Love's own Beam.

Chapter VIII.

Joys in Sorrow.

In 1892 I received from a blind acquaintance about thirty-six copies of "Santa Lucia," the first magazine of its kind to be published in Braille. Only those who for years have not had to slake their thirst with sips drawn from an almost stagnant well of literature can fully appreciate the satisfaction found in a copious drink of varied, informative, and sparkling reading. In addition to providing me with this soul and mind-refreshing stimulus, "Santa Lucia" brought me into touch with its generous-hearted and exceptionally sympathetic editors, whose ardent philanthropy is well known to a very wide circle of the blind, and to whom personally I am very deeply indebted. From that time until a few years ago, when owing to the death of one of its distinguished editors, the magazine was discontinued, I received a monthly copy gratis, as well as several delightful and instructive stories from their own little Braille library. Two years later I had the offer to share with a friend a weekly volume from the National Lending Library for the Blind, of which I then heard for the first time, though I think it had been in existence some years. This offer I gratefully accepted, but as my dear father had recently been called to a higher service, it had become incumbent upon me to do all

possible to contribute to my own maintenance. My only means to this end was unremunerative knitting, which previously I had considered no hardship but the truest source of recreation. Now, however, I sometimes found it difficult to forego the luxury of reading my newly-acquired treasures, and Sundays became my happiest days, as I could then enjoy, undisturbed, this oft-coveted pleasure, finding and storing many golden grains on which to feast my thoughts during the coming week.

In 1907, whilst staying at a G.F.S. Home of Rest at Lindfield, I was told of one handicapped like myself who was living five miles distant. Being much interested, I arranged to meet this comrade in affliction at her own house. This involved a toilsome climb to one of the highest points in Sussex; but all thought of fatigue was speedily lost in the sweetness and purity pervading the air in this exquisite spot of unspoiled Nature. I found her for whom I had come in quest sitting in a garden shelter, over which the pink roses were clustering in riotous profusion. Her long slender fingers were rapidly knitting a dainty little garment in white Shetland wool. She was much averse to meeting with the blind, and until now had successfully avoided doing so; yet even as our hands clasped was forged the first link in the chain of a much-tried, inseparable friendship, though neither of us could have said what irresistible influence could have thus drawn us together. This "ready-made" friend had chosen the vocation of an elementary school teacher; she had passed several of the

essential examinations when, at the age of seventeen, she contracted German measles, which resulted in serious trouble with her sight. For ten years she went to and fro to an Ophthalmic Hospital in London. During the whole of this period she neither studied nor did work in which there was any risk of retarding the much-hoped-for improvement to her eyes. At the age of twenty-seven she learned that all efforts had proved futile to arrest the gradual, but inevitable, failing of sight. Being of a quiet temperament, she accepted this sad intelligence with brave, patient resignation and undaunted courage. She began immediately to teach herself to read and write Braille, to knit and sew by touch, also to learn the violin, in which she found solace. She could roam the garden and adjoining fields at will, and knew exactly where to find the first violets in spring. Having an intensely keen sense of smell, she revelled in the fragrance of the many flowers around her, and in this way another five years went by, and then trouble began with her hearing; sounds became too loud, and jangled and jarred most painfully on her oversensitive nerves. She had to forego the consolation of going to church, where she had for so long been a member of the choir, until, at the age of thirty-eight, she was one day sitting near the church when the bells were playing "Rule, Britannia." As the last notes peeled forth there was a crackling sound in her ears, and all hearing died out for ever. Four years later the last vestige of lingering sight departed and at this stage we met.

The next summer I spent a few perfect days with her in those delectable environments. In 1909, we caught a glimpse of the Guiding Hand, and began to understand why we had been led by divers ways into the same path; for that year, within three months, my friend lost her father, her mother, and her beautiful home, and came to live with me in the town. So violent and sudden had been the uprooting of her peaceful life, so drastic the change, that even her great affection for me was not proof against their blighting effect and, for a time, all happiness seemed to have deserted her. Her constant lament that there remained nothing to live for inspired the verses entitled: "In the Master's Service," which I wrote specially for her comfort. We have now been together twenty-six years; the lights and shadows that have fallen on our way, the sorrows and joys we have shared, the difficulties encountered and overcome, are too numerous to be recorded in these brief memoirs.

IN THE MASTER'S SERVICE.

SAY not, my child, that thou hast nought to do,
I made no life that it should wasted be,
No leaf or flower ; and canst thou then believe
That I, thy God, no purpose have for thee ?

It may not be the work that thou didst ask,
Whereby I seek thy love for me to test ;
I know thy frame, I fashioned it, my child,
And therefore know the cross that fits it best.

So well I know the bliss of active toil,
And for my sake, what thou wouldst gladly do ;
Fret not, my child, that I withhold this task,
For lo ! I ask a greater still from you.

Take thou thy place in stern affliction's school,
And to the task in meek submission bend,
Learn thou of patience all that thou canst know,
And question not whate'er in love I send.

I need thee there to teach to those around
The strength which I alone to weakness give,
The treasure found beneath the lifted cross,
Of those who learn by faith alone to live.

Of those who learn in sorrow, want and care,
In simple trust to say : " Thy will be done " ;
Who take my hand and follow where I lead,
Nor seek the varied paths of pain to shun.

Of those who prove amid the storms of life,
The peace of those whose mind is stayed on Me,
Who find the golden lining in the cloud,
Howe'er so dark its earthward side may be.

Ah, yes, my child, there's work to do and bear,
Tho' it be not the work that thou didst ask;
I know my children and to each I love,
I set the lesson, I appoint the task.

Thou knowest not how very dear to me
The heart that through all changes trusts me still,
Believing that whatever *is* is best,
If it has been permitted by My will.

How very light will these afflictions seem
When the Eternal weight of glory has begun,
When thou has laid thy lesson books aside,
And heard, surprised, the Master's glad
"Well done!"

Chapter IX.

"At Eventide it shall be light."

" Now is the evening of my troubled day
In friendship's beauty smiling fast away."

In this quiet air of meditative retrospection, as I revisit the scenes of the vanished past and return to those through which I am still passing, that which I most particularly desire to write I find most difficult to express.

Fain would I pay the highest, warmest tribute to the inestimable value of true friendship, and the diction at my command is wholly inadequate to do justice to any of the dear friends who, with solicitous companionship, helpful kindness and ready sympathy, have softened, and are still softening, mine every trial; who have, and are still, enhancing the joy in mine every success, and have given me a broader outlook on life in general. Rather than mar this sacred theme—so far beyond my power to touch with efficiency—I will here only gratefully acknowledge how deeply am I indebted for a very full measure of this superlative blessedness that has provided me with a store of bright memories which are encircling me now as with a halo of gold.

I will now try to explain why earlier in these pages I refer to the rainbow as being inseparably associated with my work during the last few years. It chanced that an intimate acquaintance of mine,

who is deaf, blind and dumb, had become seriously concerned about our brothers and sisters in affliction who, judging by her own painful experience she believed were left too much alone, shut in upon themselves, and too seldom rightly understood. She felt that an individual society was necessary to deal with this difficult problem; and having been providentially brought into touch with a like-minded, would-be champion of this unfortunate section of humanity—himself blind and partially deaf—they exchanged ideas, and in 1928, with the assistance of a friend in possession of both sight and hearing, they founded the organisation known as the "National Deaf-Blind Helpers' League." Its aim is to discover and utilise every possible means to lessen the severe isolation, and to promote the happiness of the bearers of this dual handicap. To all of them who were within reach was extended a loving invitation to join this movement and embrace the opportunity of affording themselves that happiness which is found more completely in the joy of service to others. As our membership increased it became obvious that some special method was wanted by which the scattered units might be linked together, and by which the many still unknown to us might be reached and brought into our circle. It was my great privilege to propose for this purpose a "pass-on" hand-embossed, quarterly magazine. This proposal being readily accepted, I was appointed to carry it into effect and to act as editor. My first task was to find a suitable title for this new venture. Many

were suggested—" Pioneer," " Chrysalis," " Onward," etc., etc. And then one morning, very suddenly, my mental view was spanned by a magnificent rainbow, such as I remember to have once seen in my childhood; and simultaneously came the inspiration of its beautiful simile. It was revealed to me how the divers shades of mentality, temperament, creeds, and literary tastes, that are to be found as surely in the land of dark-silence as elsewhere—though varying as distinctly as do the colours of the rainbow—when blending in the reflection of understanding, sympathy and comradeship, would harmonize into joy-giving radiance, and " Rainbow " became the name of our magazine and the emblem of our League.

The first issue of our little Braille Visitor, thus called because it carried messages from member to member, consisted of five small copies which were circulated among about fifty readers. As the work proceeded, many willing hands took part in the copying, transcribing and binding, and with each issue was seen an appreciative increase, both in the number of copies and pages, until, in 1931, aided by the generosity of the National Institute for the Blind, our once wee magazine of five copies evolved into a respectable stereotyped Journal, comprising 100 copies, each of 40 full-sized pages. To-day (1936) there are 300 copies of 52 pages; and " The Rainbow " has found its way not only throughout the British Isles but to many foreign parts, and has also an edition in the " Moon " type, thus supplying a long-felt need of our loneliest

comrades—those who, by reason of age or other disabilities, are unable to learn Braille. This edition is edited by a sighted lady.

When at the age of sixty-four I began this very interesting work I was keenly sensitive of my own incompetence ; but as a more capable person was not forthcoming, I accepted the responsibility, resolving to do the best I could. It has proved a rich and wonderful experience—this reaching out to my fellow travellers along the unseen, silent road. It has brought me into touch with a strange mixture of characters—some who carry the burden of daily life attached to an ill-fitting, irritating yoke of sore aggressiveness that chafes their soul at every step they take, and hinders their spiritual development. These seem to find pleasure in finding fault with natural disciplines, and to consider life worth the living only when they can sermonize on the desirability of its ending. Yet within the hearts of even these sad ones, deep down beneath the debris of ruined hope and trust, amid the choking dust of suspicion and resentment, loving patience might discover an uncut diamond of superb quality. There are others who, realising that "underneath are the Everlasting arms," seem to be quite unmindful of the cross they bear ; what might have been its crushing weight has been lost in the magnitude of divine strength, which has been so wondrously perfected in their weakness ; enriched with faith and buoyed with courage, they forget self in the gladness of helping their less fortunate comrades. This glimpse of the psychical diversity

existing beneath our Rainbow banner will enable my readers the more readily to conjecture how easily I may have pleased some whilst offending others; and all workers in this most deserving cause must be prepared to cope with the same disadvantages. But God's blessing has, throughout, rested upon our labours, which have prospered beyond our most sanguine expectations. To elucidate my own definition of this work, I quote below from a letter which I addressed to the members in the second number of our little Visitor, May, 1929:

"We should do well to think of our League as we should think of the building of a great Cathedral, of which the plan has been submitted into the hands of the builder. The site has been purchased, the ground—by strenuous exertion—has been cleared, the foundation has been laid, but scarcely are the walls visible; the only pleasing feature is the good fellowship and cheerful toil of the workers.

"We can well imagine with what irritation, or indulgent amusement, would those workmen receive such questions as: 'Why isn't the roof on?'; 'Where are the doors and windows?'; 'Of what use can this be; there are lots of churches about?' Yet, figuratively, these are the questions which are addressed to the founders and helpers of the League.

"Let us suppose a few years have passed, and look again at the Cathedral; what a magnificent structure! The roof is on, the richly stained windows are in, the carved oaken doors are

adjusted, the organ has been set up, all the finishing touches have been added, and an atmosphere of rest and peace pervades the interior of its sacred walls. With what reverent joy and proud gratitude every workman, from humblest to greatest, who have had some share in the building, now behold the completion of their united labour.

"And this is what we would have our community—a stately edifice founded upon brotherly love, walled by the stones of sincerity, and cemented with loyalty; with the doors of true friendship, that shall swing wide to admit our every comrade and close again to shut out the chilling airs of misunderstanding. The windows must be stained with the warm tints of sympathy through which the sunshine of God's love shall shine with added radiance. The music of hope and courage shall lift us above our trials, and within our League may we find an atmosphere of peace and rest.

"But, to attain to the consummation of our highest ideal, we need every helping hand; we must have confidence in each other and in ourselves; and above all, we must have unity and prayer."

LIFE'S JOURNEY.

When wand'ring by the sparkling stream
Where bright the sunbeams played,
Where wavelets gaily danced along,
And liquid music made,
The world to me was lovely then,
My life—a fairy dream,
With radiance reflecting joy,
Like that transparent stream.

Ere long I sailed the tossing main,
Where dark the waters rolled,
Each billow high uplifted there,
Its tale of anger told.
How stormy then the world to me,
My life—a troubled sea,
Where clouds of disappointed hope
Hung lowering over me.

I roamed the verdant meadows o'er,
The shaded woodlands fair,
Where, sweetly, breath of flowerets
Perfumed the morning air.
The world to me was perfect then,
My life—a holy calm,
My heart attuned to Nature's best
Poured forth its joyous psalm.

Into a dreary desert then
My pilgrim way I wound,
Where, from the Sun's o'erpowering rays,
No welcome shade I found.
Oh! then the world did glaring seem,
My life too parched and dry,
With no refreshing, cooling breeze,
No green oasis nigh.

I stood beneath the orchard boughs
Which drooped beneath their load;
The song of busy reapers near
Came floating o'er the road.
Then plentiful the world to me,
My life—a fruitful day,
Where sowing time, and waiting long,
To harvest-tide gave way.

Then o'er a wild unfertile plain,
Where stunted herbage grew,
Disconsolate and slow I went,
With naught to cheer my view.
The world to me was barren then,
My life—a woeful dearth,
Like that dry stunted herbage growth
Forced from the hardened earth.

And now I climb the last steep hill,
Aglow with purple light ;
I pause to view the traversed way,
Ere cometh on the night.
So differently appear the scenes
Through which my feet have trod,
As now I glimpse the wondrous love
And mystic plan of God.

The angry billows are all changed,
In majesty they rise,
A glimmering of pure white foam
Against the darkened skies.
And there, amid the burning sands,
Mid dust and lurid shine,
The shadow of a towering rock
For weary souls like mine.

And e'en upon the barren plain,
To those who seek aright,
Some wondrous treasures might be found
Ablaze with Heavenly light.
I see it now, what ill did seem
In wisdom was designed,
Each life its pattern has to weave,
Of varied shade combined.

Thus while I did repining fret,
I missed the hidden bliss ;
I saw the frown, and failed to feel
The sympathising kiss.
My murmurs added to the storm,
And more confusion made ;
So, oft I lost those soothing words :
" 'Tis I, be not afraid."

Oh ! that in simple faith would we
Who fail to understand,
Look up into our Saviour's face
And take His guiding hand.
How happy then our journey here,
What wealth of glad content,
When we recall the vanished past—
As each one came and went.

No sad remorse at eventide
Is theirs, who learn to see
How beautiful the pattern proves
When woven trustingly.
The chastened joy, each sorrow blest—
Soft light and shade suffused—
These precious threads by Love designed,
Must lovingly be used.

TO A KISS.

O ELOQUENT, mute language,
O touch Divinely sweet,
When those who've long been parted
In tender fondness meet.

Well may the blush of beauty
So often tinge the cheek,
When loving lips betoken
What tongue has failed to speak.

By thee, to new-born infant
The mother tells her joy ;
By thee, when tired and restless
She soothes her fretful boy.

And oh, when dear ones leave us,
When the soul has winged its flight,
By thee we touch in sadness
The sleeper cold and white.

By thee we pledge forgiveness
On brow of wayward child ;
By thee atone for follies,
To dear ones reconciled.

No language half so simple,
Yet none one half so grand ;
By thee, in love fulfilling
Our Saviour's blest command.

TO THE ANGEL OF SLEEP.

Angel of Sleep, what blessings are thine,
What power to soothe with magic Divine ;
Oh ! come to me with thy sylph-like tread
A-trilling thy lullaby o'er my bed ;
My fevered spirit, a-pining for rest,
Pillow for me on thy gentle breast.

My thoughts are rioting, night is long
With ghostly shadows and goblin song.
Let me arise on thine astral wings
To seek the realms of forgotten things ;
Reclaiming there, from the vanished past,
The joys that were then too fair to last.

Then in golden dreams to breach the space
Dividing me far from Love's embrace ;
Or in sweet oblivion calmly lie,
Letting the hours beguiled go by.
My senses lulled by the drug potent,
The kindest remedy Nature sent.

Oh ! God, in pity, this angel send
The sick to comfort, the weary tend ;
Her tender influence giving rest
To those a-tossing by doubts distressed ;
The fretful child, worn mother as well,
The criminal lone in prison cell.

The aged and sad who are waiting here,
The folding arms of that Angel dear.
Hasten, dear Sleep, go to them now,
Dropping thy kisses upon their brow,
And keep them safe in thy sheltering love,
Till they shall awake in Heaven above.

SOLACE.

Art thou 'neath thy sorrow bending,
With no friend to comfort near?
Hark! Thy Saviour bids the weary
"Rest thee, heavy-laden, here."
"Cast on Me thine ev'ry burden,
As the days thy strength shall be
Take thy cross and follow meekly,
I will guide and succour thee."

Art thou sick in thy transgressions,
In sin's burning fever toss'd,
In despair's delirium raving
"Thou, my soul, for e'er are lost."
Hark! He speaks—the great Physician—
"Not the whole came I to save,
'Tis the sick that needeth healing,
For the lost my life I gave."

Are the waves of trouble rolling?
Dashing o'er faith's fragile bark;
Skies of Hope's fair promise clouded,
All is disappointment, dark?
Listen, then, thro' storms now raging
Hear His gentle voice close by,
Tenderly and sweetly saying,
"Fear thou not, for it is I."

Art thou worn by grief and suffering,
Strength and courage almost spent,
Asking, "Are all these afflictions
In His love and mercy sent?"
Ev'ry branch requirest pruning,
Sharp the pruning knife must be;
See! the pruner's hand is piercèd,
Wounded for its love to thee.

Art thou nearing that chill valley
Where the shadows darkly glide,
Timorous that there some evil
May thy faltering steps betide?
Do not fear, but as the Psalmist
Recognise thy Saviour near,
With His rod and staff supporting,
With Himself the gloom to cheer.

Soon shall every sad misgiving
End in glad assurance sweet;
All thy sorrows here when ended
Will but make thy joy complete.
With life's tangled skein unravelled,
With the night of weeping past,
With thine ev'ry cross transfigured,
Thou shalt meet Thy Lord, at last.

MYSELF.

Not the grave faults that are often showing,
Ill weeds apace so readily growing;
Nor those which the dearest alone are knowing,
In myself that's hidden within.

Nor is it the will so weakly swaying
'Twixt right and wrong, and from wisdom straying;
Nor the guileful vice with virtues playing
In myself that is hidden within.

Triumph is there, for which faith has striven,
Love, with its radiance, doubts has riven;
Strength and courage for the conflict given
In myself that is hidden within.

Hope and prayer on ethereal wings,
Hover o'er the blossoms which friendship brings;
Peace, tenderly tuning discordant strings
In myself that is hidden within.

Patience a-weaving the myriad threads
Of the varied colours life's fortune sheds;
Fairest and richest where sympathy treads
In myself that is hidden within.

Oh, self! with thy power divine select
Beauty and goodness, the evil reject;
God, thy Creator, His image reflect
In myself that is hidden within.

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